

A top-down photograph of a person's feet wearing white slippers on a light-colored wooden floor. A red plastic cup is lying on its side on the floor between the feet. A large white circular graphic is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing text.

Preparing for the Unexpected

November 13, 2021

Dr. Barbara Kaminski





Autism and the “Unexpected”

Rigid and ritualistic behavior



changes to the physical environment



rigid preferences about things like food or everyday objects



a need for routine around daily activities such as meals or bedtime



verbal rituals



compulsive behavior

Managing routines

Dependence on routines can increase during times of change, stress, and illness

Unexpected changes are often most difficult to deal with

May be able to manage it better if they can prepare for changes in advance.

Be Prepared

- Find out about the change
- Describe the change
- Use visual supports
- Involve the right people
- Manage transitions
- Be aware of anxiety



Strategies – “predictable” changes



Daily visual schedules and timers



Add to the visual schedule (for future)



Use first-then and picture cards



Practice (more on that in a minute...)



Social stories

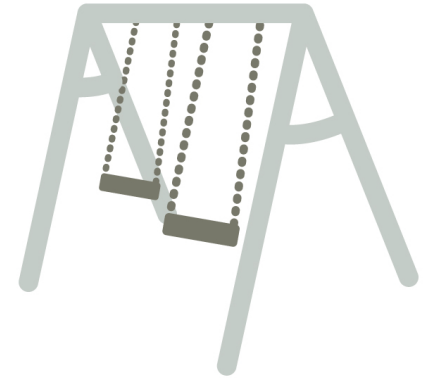
FIRST

Doctor visit



THEN

Playground



Strategies – “unpredictable” changes



Include a “surprise” slot on the visual schedule and practice it



“Distract” and redirect



Use calming strategies



IN CASE OF

EMERGENCY

Prepare

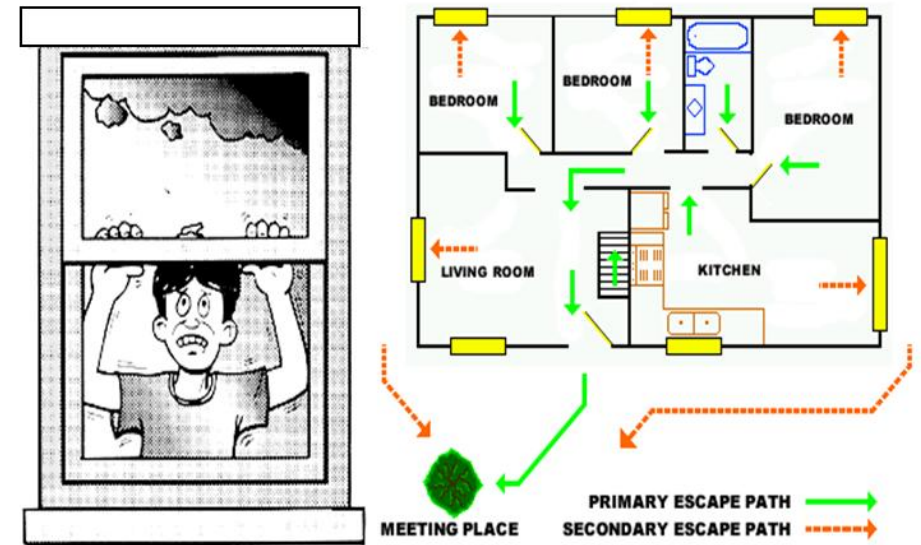
- Create a laminated card with child's basic info
- Make sure that one person is "designated" (and knows to stay with the child)
- Provide local agencies (fire department, police department, etc.) with info in advance



Practice!

- Define what an emergency is
- Practice calling 911
- Practice escape routes
- Practice emergency sounds
- Use memory aides, such as songs
- Use social stories
- Practice recognizing “helpers”

Plan Your Escape!



Your provider may be able to help

- Teaching flexible behaviors
- Teaching responses to unexpected situations
- Knowing the difference between safe and dangerous behavior

